



Issue #12: REDUCING HOLIDAY STRESS



The holidays are a wonderful time of year, but it can also be a time when we feel the most pressured

There are expectations about family get-togethers; obligations about where you need to spend your time; and concerns about spending too much money.

Here are some tips to help you manage the holidays:

- **Manage the occasion.** You may need to be more assertive and say 'no' to events that don't add meaning to the holiday season for you personally.
- **Clarify family expectations.** This may mean not giving a gift to every grown family member or rotating who will give a gift each year.
- **Lower your financial burden.** Budget your spending and stick to it. If you can get through the holidays without major debt afterwards, you can enjoy the season without the guilt.
- **Get organized ahead of time.** Plan ahead as best as you can to get your gift wrapping and other chores done before the last minute. Then give yourself the gift of relaxation rather than stress!
- **Remember that it's the thought that counts.** Don't let competitiveness and perfectionism send you on too many shopping trips. Homemade, thoughtful, inexpensive gifts from the heart are often cherished far more than high-priced items.
- **Take short relaxation breaks.** If you find yourself trying to sustain a fast pace, be sure to take some down time. Just taking a few minutes to take a few deep breaths and consciously breathe away tension can be a big help.



Understanding Holiday Stress

- **Make a list.** Write down everything you'd like to do this holiday season and set reasonable priorities in order to get the most amount of joy from the limited amount of time you have to spend with family, friends, and co-workers. Remember, this year's priorities may look different than those of past holidays.
- **Take care of yourself.** For most people, the holidays go hand-in-hand with too much sugar, fat, caffeine, and alcohol, and not nearly enough exercise and sleep. One of the best ways to combat stress is to pay attention to your body's need for healthy food, exercise, and sleep during this busy time of year.
- **Take time to laugh.** If you get too stressed, take a laughter break and rent a funny holiday comedy. Laughter is the best medicine.
- **Make a change.** With the holiday season fast approaching, make a commitment to yourself to find a deeper satisfaction in the holiday experience. Don't just do things because they fit into your schedule.

Instead, consider if the event or activity fits in with your values and the meaning of the season. Remember, life is really about the journey. Savour the moments — allow yourself enough time to celebrate each activity before rushing on to the next.

Don't let the hustle and bustle of the season steal away opportunities to be thankful for the people, experiences, and events that will make this year unique and memorable. Last, but not least, commit to taking some time to reflect on the deeper meaning and spirit of the holidays for you personally, for your family, and for humanity and the world. Happy holidays!

 Send us your questions, comments, and suggestions — lifelines@homewoodhealth.com

For more information, to arrange a counselling session, or to access any of your EFAP services, please contact a Client Services Representative. We are ready to speak with you 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in English or French. All calls are completely confidential.

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